

199 rue de Grenelle

Paris 7^e, France

April 18, 1961

Dear Professor Ferrater-Mora:

I realize with shame that it is four months since I received your very kind letter of December 18. I continuously postponed answering it because of various projects and possibilities, and wanted to be able to tell you the results. In any event, virtually nothing has come of them. I was in fact rejected by the Rockefeller Foundation, despite, I believe, the support of the vice-president in charge of these grants, Kenneth Thompson. I presume that the reason was the too abstract character of my project. This at least was also the opinion of Raymond Aron, whom I know here, and who is a friend of Thompson's. Aron said that he would speak to Thompson on my behalf sometime this Spring, but it is certainly too late for anything to be done about it for next year, and, as a twice-rejected candidate, I may now be persona non grata at Rockefeller Foundation. The only other possibility for the future, which is rather ephemeral, concerns the University of Texas, both in classics and philosophy, but so far I am not thinking seriously about it.

I have had a most fruitful and exciting year. The major reason for this is Alexandre Kojève, about whom I may have written earlier. I am also seeing regularly a friend of Kojève's, a most remarkable Jesuit, Gaston Fessard, who is trying to reconstitute Christian theology with Hegel rather than Aristotle as the philosophical base. However I may feel about this -- and I think it is not unreasonable, since Aristotle was in no sense a Christian, whereas Hegel, whether an atheist or a believer, explicitly philosophizes Christianity -- the man himself is an extraordinary personality. Kojève and Fessard have put me in touch with Raymond Aron, but I do not know him as well, having seen him only once so far (he was in Harvard until recently). I shall also be seeing Alexandre Koyré (also recently back from the States) and probably Gabriel Marcel. We spent two and a half weeks in England, which included a long and interesting stay at Oxford. I had some long conversations with G.R.G. Mure, who is very lonely and pessimistic about the unphilosophical situation in England. We talked with Leslie Beck, and spent an entertaining hour with Sir Isaiah Berlin (whom I may be seeing again in Paris). All these men to one degree or another have given me a concrete picture of European intellectual existence (I also talked with M.F. Sciacca and Enzo Paci in Italy) and the contemporary philosophical situation. Although it is radically better than in America, I cannot say that it fills me with unbounded optimism. It is strange how the history of philosophy has been "historicized" -- even politicized -- by the most imaginative thinkers here; while the more orthodox professors are better educated versions of their American counterparts. Why must it be the case that, in our time at least, those who take philosophy seriously as a living totality do not take seriously; are prevented by their very seriousness, from taking seriously the thinkers of the past? Kojève is both an exception and a proof of this dilemma; he knows the history of philosophy, and he lives within it in an original and imaginative way. But as a genuine Hegelian -- the only one I know who is not a neo-Hegelian, -- he uses his imagination and originality in a surprisingly conventional manner: namely, to get the Hegelian

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dialectical classification carried through. But this is a minor criticism of a major thinker.

1981, 21 April

I have done quite a bit of writing so far this year: an essay on Thales, in which I try to make philosophically intelligible the fragments attributed to him in Diogenes Laertius while dealing with the question of the origin of philosophy; a paper on Aristotle's De Anima, in which I discuss the analogy between the mind and the hands; and a long, long essay on Esotericism, in which I discuss the necessity of the distinction between the private and the public in terms of the structure or nature of thought itself, with some interpretations of Nietzsche and Heidegger as two kinds of esotericists, and with an attempt to show the connection between political existence and philosophy. But I fear that this last, if not too "esoteric," is certainly too unfinished as yet. I am now in the midst of some reflections on the question of Ideas, based on a study of the Philebus and Parmenides, but tackling the question in a fundamental or speculative rather than a scholarly way.

I am sorry to hear that Being and Death will not appear in English, since Spanish is not one of my languages. Your comment on the difficulty of finding a publisher for a philosophical book makes me feel even more that I am writing for myself -- and perhaps a few friends. But how can I complain, when this is a direct consequence of my own conception of the nature of philosophy?

I look forward to hearing from you again, please forgive me for the delay in answering. I hope it will be possible to meet with you in the states this fall, now that we are both again to be citizens of the Commonwealth.

With best wishes, and thanks for your help in the fellowship applications,

Stanley Rosen

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